and debt restructuring of outstanding loans for farmers in distress and in arrears. States and Union Territories are advised from time to time for effective implementation of the schemes for development of agriculture.

Congress of farmers

1953. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has organized Congress of farmers for the benefit of farmers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the farmers benefited by such schemes, especially in Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) if not, by when such Congress would be held at the National or State levels?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC) has not organized Congress of farmers at National Level and there is no such proposal at present. However, the States/UTs can organize such Congress of farmers for facilitating farmer to farmer learning, interaction, technology transfer and for training of farmers under existing schemes. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has conducted Rythu Sedassu (Farmers' Meet) at each Revenue divisional Head Quarters during 2006-07 and 2007-08 in all 79 Revenue Divisions. Large numbers of farmers have participated from different villages for one day Rythu Sadassu (Farmers' Meet) organized for interaction and transfer of technology besides exhibiting of live demonstration. 3.16 lakh farmers during 2006-07 and 4.06 lakh farmers during 2007-08 have been benefited by such schemes in Andhra Pradesh.

Price hike of onion

1954. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that prices of onion is rising very frequently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is the reaction of Government; and

(d) what are the steps Government is taking in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b)Price of onion is subject to seasonal fluctuations. The prices of onion, measured in terms of Wholesale Price Index (WPI), which declined from 167.1 in 2005 to 137.3 in 2006 (by 17.8 per cent) has increased to 243.5 in 2007 (January to November). On month-to-month basis in 2007 the WPI for onion declined for 245.8 in February to 165.3 in May 2007. An upsurge in prices from June 2007 continued up to October 2007 which has been followed again by a phase of decline in prices in November 2007.

(c) and (d) Government has been monitoring the movement in prices of onion with the objective to protect the interest of both the growers and the consumers of onion in the country.

To contain the abnormal hike in consumer prices of onion, the Government took the measures like supplying onion through Kendriya Bhandars, retail outlets of the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation Ltd., (NAFED) and the restriction

of exports of onion by raising its Minimum Export Prices (MEP). The MEP of onion was increased to $ 495 a tonne from 01.10.2007.

Now that the prices of onion have started declining in the market, the Government has started encouraging export of onion by reducing its MEP to $ 250 per tonne with effect from December 2007.

Compensation to farmers for crop loss

†1955. SHRI AJAY SINGH CHAUTALA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that compensation to the farmers is granted at a very poor rate in case their crop is ruined due to natural calamities;

(b) what criteria is adopted in order to assess the amount of compensation; and

(c) whether Government would contemplate to increase the amount of compensation to the affected farmers at the rate of rupees ten thousand per acre?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is concerned with matters relating to items and norms of assistance from Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) and National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF).

MHA have informed that assistance to farmers for loss of crops in the wake of natural calamities is provided in the form of agriculture input subsidy and not compensation, in accordance with the items and norms approved by the Government.

According to them, it has generally been a practice to review and revise the itmes and norms of assistance immediately after the Award of the Finance Commission is accepted by the Government. Subsequent to acceptance by the Government of the Award of the 12th Finance Commission, an Expert Group was constituted by the MHA to review and recommend revision of the items and norms of assistance from CRF/NCCF.

MHA have further informed that the Government of India, considering the recommendations of the Expert Group has approved the revision of items and norms of assistance from CRF/NCCF, with effect from 27th June, 2007. The norms for agriculture input subsidy have been revised as per details given below:

Item	Old norm (per hectare)	Revised norm (per hectare)
For Rainfed Areas	Rs.1000/-	Rs. 2000/-
For Irrigated Areas	Rs. 2500/-	Rs. 4000/-
For Perennial crops	Rs. 4000/-	Rs. 6000/-

Recommendation of Radhakrishna Committee

1956. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:
SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Radhakrishna Committee has recommended to set up an

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.